



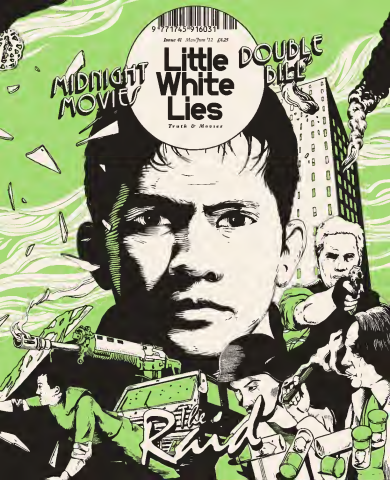
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MIDNIGHT
MOVIES

Little White Lies

Truth & Murder

DOUBLE
BILL





CHAPTER

1

IN WHICH WE REVIEW

THE RAID



The Raid

GARETH EVANS' *SILAT SMASH-AND-GRAB* IS ONE
OF THE GREAT ACTION MOVIES OF OUR TIME.

Directed by Gareth Evans
Starring Iko Uwais, Joe Taslim, Yayan Ruhian
Released May 18

It may be Ben Ussis taking a beating up there on screen, but there's only one person really getting their ass kicked in *The Road*: you. Gareth Evans' delightfully violent Indonesian action flick will leave you bruised and breathless, feeling every splintered bone and snapped neck as if it was your own.

Tick-tock. It begins with a close-up of a watch and a gun, immediately establishing Evans' preoccupation with speed and violence. The plot is lightly sketched – a rookie SWAT team is dispatched to take down a 15-story tenement housing the worst of the city's criminal underworld. At the top, presiding over this shadow state, sits Tama (Ray Sahetapy), a previously untouchable mob boss now being targeted by questionable elements within the city's police force.

But then and will not go to plan. Stranded in hostile territory, outnumbered, outgunned and scared out of their minds, the SWAT team faces annihilation. Step forward Raza (Ussis), a church-faceted wrecking ball prepared to do whatever it takes to get back home to his pregnant wife.

And yet, befitting this film in which the rules of the game are listed at last never fully understood, a parallel story unfolds. Because *The Road* is not just an action-thriller, it's a rescue mission. "I'll get her back," says Raza to an old man as he leaves his house. By the end of the film you'll be left to judge for yourself: who has been saved? And, more to the point, who has been played?



These, of course, are background considerations, main *The Road*'s only commentary on Tama's criminal enterprise. From his perspective, this is nothing more than an epic war waged for control of a lucrative business – a murderously hostile corporate takeover in which revenue streams run with blood.

But it's the foreground that counts as Evans and Ussis introduce the western world to what, Indonesia's native martial art, the kind of fluid fighting system that makes Tony Jaa's *Mun Muay Thai* look like a drunken post-punk rambler.

Together, Evans and Ussis (alongside Nayan Bhawan, who plays Tama's arch-enforcer, known only as "Mad Dog") have choreographed some of the most jaw-dropping fight scenes ever committed to film. There are moments in *The Road* – a throat impaled on a jagged doorframe, a point-blank rescue, a lightning fast knife strike – a haunting – that elicit a physical response. This is cinema at its most visceral – a gasping, grinning, happy-slopping sucker punch delivered by a new star at the making. **A-**





Typically handsome with the sort of deceptive softness that hints at hair-trigger violence, Iko Uwais has a natural screen presence. He's both hunter and hunted in the blood-splattered corridors of the apartment block where wave after wave of lawless henchmen are dispatched with fists, feet, elbows, knives, sticks and, in one of many voice-inducing whoop-'n'-holer moments, an overhead light fitting.

A potent cocktail of Tony Jaa, Jackie Chan and some sort of advertisement-enhanced T.M.A., Uwais throws himself (literally) first-into the action, breaking every Health & Safety statute in the book in a quest to become the ultimate screen fighter. But there are grace notes and subtlety, too, hidden in the eye of this human whirlwind.

He's nicely supported by Evans' direction. Brought up on a diet of kung fu films in South Wales, he's got the obvious choice to kick-start the Indonesian film industry, but that's exactly what Evans has done.

True, you can see some of the stitching in certain cuts, but that's only because Evans isn't trying to hide. Eschewing quick edits for brilliant fluidity, he leaves you to absorb every killing blow, every death agon. Backed by some bone-jarring Foley work and masterly integrated special effects, the result is a thrillingly kinetic but superbly grounded piece of cinema that winningly defies current think-and-you'll-miss-it action conventions.

But don't be lulled into thinking he's just a point-and-shoot mercenary. The *Raid* may not be overburdened with narrative, but Evans proves himself an adept visual storyteller with an intuitive grasp of pace and rhythm. The action scenes are built on an expertly crafted set-up, orchestrated by Evans with the same *de ténor* of touch that sees Tanya run over the *SWAT* team into his web.

He's cited the films of Panna Rinkritzi and Sam Peckinpah as early influences, but there's more than a passing hint of the two Jekks, Carpenter and McTierran, not to mention shatstorm stabilisers (*Kick*). And yet, like *Austral on Prohibit 13*, the *Raid* is often a tamer proposition when its adversaries are off screen, heard but unseen, shapes in the darkness waiting to strike.

It's not just life action, though. There's an unmissable videogame vibe about the resupplying routines, the weapon pick-ups, the boss battles and especially the level-up structure that sees Rama ascending towards a final showdown. It may be tagged with astro stylings, but this is a thoroughly modern action movie.

Destined for late-night cult status, the *Raid* is an irreducible adrenaline shot delivered straight to the nervous system. It may not be one for the Catholics, for those who see cinema as a silent communion with the gods. But for anyone who yearns for the participatory thrill of the movies, Evans has created an unmissable event, one made for sharing in the most raucous atmosphere imaginable. Sure, *The Raid* may find itself ambushed by the occasional cliché, but there's nothing but one stand in the way of this cinematic smash-and-grab. **B**

ANTICIPATION

Kung fu flicks are 10 a penny, but a fast buzz of confidence suggests *The Raid* is worth a second look.

ENJOYMENT

Pound for pound, the most exciting action movie – and one of the best cinematic spectacles – of the last decade

IN RETROSPECT

Guaranteed to be a word-of-mouth hit. Expect to be introducing people to *The Raid* for years to come

3

4

4

Interview by Matt Richerson

Director's

Photography by Paul Willoughby

Commentary

Gareth Evans takes us through the movies and memories that inspired The Raid.

Few journeys are as unlikely as the one that took Gareth Evans to Indonesia. Born and raised in a small village on the outskirts of Sweden, Evans smiled, he grew up watching karate action on TV with his friends, "dicking around [kicking back] getting pinballs and vests prettier, we were Bruce Lee."

He didn't bother dreaming of Hollywood—it was over 100 years earlier. He did, however, make a film, *Kodistön*, in 2004. An uncompromising drama that proudly advertised its own "graphic violence," it scored a B&B release in the US but made little impression on the indie film biz. Evans, married and still living in Sweden, returned to the daily grind, glumly wondering what was his only shot.

It wasn't his wife and family and contacts in Indonesia, she begged Evans up with a job shooting a documentary about child, the country's native magical art. So they upped sticks to Southeast Asia, only for the six months sabbatical to turn into permanent residence.

Entered by a film industry poised to follow in the footsteps of Hong Kong and Thailand, and invigorated by the discovery of Iko Uwais, a screen fighter in the world of *Deep Jai*, in 2009 Evans saw the leap into full feature production with *Merantau*, "Moving to Indonesia wasn't so much of a cultural shock," he explains. "The big difference

was making that leap from low-budget independent film to suddenly having a crew of 150 people. I was learning a lot as I went along but at the same time, inside, I was freaking out."

Just as *Merantau* wouldn't have existed without Michael Mann's earlier TV work, LA filmmaker Morneau laid the groundwork for *The Raid*. "I'm older, ballier cousin."

But it was far from plain sailing. "On the first day of shooting there was this one fight scene that we called in two or three takes," remembers Evans. "We got so excited. Everyone started thinking, 'Oh shit, it's going to be different this time. We're going to be good now, we're going to get it done fast.'" Then all of a sudden everything started to go wrong.

The Raid took its toll on everyone, especially Uwais, who injured his knee before a single call of *fight* had been shot, after being crushed over a table during a casting session. Once on set, some of the fight scenes took 40 takes to get right.

But as hard as it got, Evans learned his lesson, reminding himself that they were trying to do something new, something great. And learning himself, "ooh, oh the people and film they were honoring along the way. It's these influences that IMLes asked Evans to reveal, offering as a different kind of commentary on the making of his movie. ■





"Three of my role influences are Jackie Chan, Sammo Hung and Pansa Rittikrai. In Thailand, those guys have pioneered martial arts cinema from the '70s through the '80s and up until now.

"What we borrowed from Jackie Chan was the idea that there's a certain vulnerability in the lead role. That's something that we really wanted to bring to Eko's character - we wanted the audience to feel like he wasn't just a killing machine. There are moments in the film when he's so beaten and bruised, if anyone attacked him that'd be the end for him. We didn't want him doing anything too fantastical; we had to keep our action scenes and our character grounded in a certain sort of heightened reality so the audience can relate to him.

"In terms of choreography, the level of brutality and aggression came from Sammo Hung and from Pansa because their work is hard-edged and tough and aggressive but what I really love is that there's a certain roughness to it as well. So we'll get these complex pieces of choreography, but also these takedowns or throws that look like they've come out of sheer desperation. That was one of the things that we really wanted to do: have these graceful moments of choreography, but every now and then just get savage."

LEGENDARY

"Some people have told me the film feels like a videogame, but the weird thing is they add 'I don't mean it as disrespect.' I never take it as disrespect because it absolutely feels like a videogame.

"I'm a big fan of things like *Call of Duty* and *Battlefield*, and they play a part in terms of how we were trying to figure out the gameplay of the film. But it's more like the general structure - that idea of climbing up - that was a videogame feeling."

"Some of the design of the bed guys. For instance, was done to be like that. As we progress through the film, the end of level bosses get harder and harder. There's a gap in the beginning who pulls out a machete from under the table and we set him up like he's going to be some guy who plays a predominant part but then we kill him off with one of the other bed guys who's even more badass and more of a challenge and more of a threat. So there's definitely this feeling of taking inspiration from videogames."

"The biggest influence for the action scenes is *Hard Boiled*, without doubt. For me, that's the absolute pinnacle of action cinema, and *The Wild Bunch*. What influenced me with these was that there's a degree of clarity when it comes to the action that we don't tend to have these days - the idea that you can see everything and get a clear spatial awareness wherever you are in the location. And the detail in terms of who's getting shot, how many times and where. Nowadays, it tends to be a hail of bullets and people just stagger around and then fall, but in the John Woo films and the Sam Peckinpah films, it was treated like it was something poetic and horribly beautiful at the same time. That's something I wanted to at least try and aspire to reach in *The Raid*."

"When we design the choreography, we do it with rhythm in mind. We treat it as if every block and every hit is like percussion. That harks back to Jackie Chan as well - if you watch the scene in *Armour of God* where he's fighting against all the monks, and you listen to the music playing beneath the punches and the blocks, they're almost in rhythm with each other. Every punch and every block is a drumbeat."

"When we were doing the choreography for *The Raid* and trying to figure out how many punches or kicks there should be, we'd do a clip and that's when the punch would come in. When a guy gets shot three times in the face, he doesn't get it three times because it's gruesome and violent, he gets shot three times because that was the rhythm. Bam-bam-bam. It feels right. Graphic, but right. So it's rhythm not violence."

"Throughout my childhood my dad was a big part in shaping the films I'd watch. There was nothing too highbrow, nothing too low grade - if it was something that we'd all enjoyed, that was all that counted. He introduced me to Jackie Chan and rented *Hard Boiled*. He specifically said, 'You're not to watch this until I've seen it first,' because he knew it would be aggressive but he wanted to check. My dad had no problem with playful violence, but sadistic violence he had a real problem with. So he was, like, 'If it's sadistic I want to watch it with you and tell you why it's wrong.'"

"He was a schoolteacher, so when I came home I was always 45 or 50 minutes earlier than

him. And I remember getting off the bus and just running back to the house to watch the first 45 minutes of *Hard Boiled* before he came home, then I'd rewind it and pretend like I'd been good and hadn't seen it. The next morning he was like, 'Okay, you ain't watch it, but there's one scene that I want to keep an eye on you for,' and it was the scene where Anthony Wong shoots all the patients in the hospital. When that came up he was like, 'Okay, now that's wrong.' And that was it. That was the moral teaching."

"When we were growing up as kids there was a video shop from a local town that would send a video van to the top of our street. I used to go in there and there'd be a collection of films. Back then it was super exciting to be able to find something new from Asia that I hadn't seen before. Dad'd get a bunch of Bruce Lee films and a couple of Jackie Chan films, then these really obscure titles like *Chinatown* or *Hercules*."

"Magnificent Bodyguards is the first Jackie Chan film I ever saw. My mom was aggressively against it because there was a scene in which a guy got skinned, so she was like, 'You're not having Jackie Chan films anymore.' Then after that, *Armour of God* came into the house and that was much more playful so she was like, 'Okay, maybe we can watch some of his films.' I searched high and low to get *Police Story*, and I rented it almost every month and I watched it 14, 15 times. I was the VHS daps. You fell like you were finding something no one else had. These days everybody gets everything straight away so now everything is great and everything sucks." (3)

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PRODUCTION DESIGNER

IN CINEMAS JUNE 29TH



CHAPTER

2

IN WHICH WE

INTRODUCE OURSELVES

IMLian:

What do you love about movies?

Gareth Evans:

Oh, okay. When it comes to watching a film in a cinema, it's all about the escapism. It's all about the fact that it doesn't matter what's going on in your life, it doesn't matter how good things are or how bad things are, for that two hours or so you completely escape from it. You know, films have the power to take you into a completely different world and make you experience things, but from a comfortable place as well. So, you know, when it comes to rollercoasters, I'm a chickenabit and I can't go on them, but when it comes to horror films I love the thrill and the adrenalin rush of being in the cinema, and the fact that a film - just sitting there and watching a film - can make me want to get up and leave the room because I'm so terrified... That's an incredible power that the image and sound has. Yeah. It's unlike any other art form, I think.



Human, porcine and avian origin



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Chapter

3

IN WHICH WE

DISCUSS THEMES OF

UNCOMMON INTEREST

INSPIRED BY OUR FEATURE FILM

"You" cannot
here to do
good



GREATEST HITS

Words by Adam Woodward

Back in February, we asked *EMILY* readers to name their all-time favourite fight scene, the epic "Hound" Rudy Piper-on-Kelita David alley brawl in *They Live*, the Hammer and Driscoll Len schooling in *Gladiator* or Norton walling on Jared Leto in *Fight Club*. It's no accident that these choreographed scuffles have achieved iconic status. Each was conceived with painstaking precision by some of the most experienced with painstaking precision experts in the business. But just what does it take to execute the perfect punch or deliver a particularly memorable kick? To find out, we asked three of the world's top combat choreographers to deconstruct their greatest hits.

IKO UWAIS

by Dave Karger



I
My favourite scene in *The Raid* is the fight in the corridor, which we call "Carry Bowo". Because I'm carrying the character of Bowo on my shoulders. There's a lot of different elements that make that scene so much harder for me. First of all, the SWAT flack jacket is restrictive because there's no room for flexibility, but I have to move fast. Then I'm using two difficult weapons - the stick and the knife. At the same time, I've got a gap on my shoulders, and on top of that I've got these heavy military boots, which means I can't kick cleanly because they're weighing my leg down. Finally, just to make matters a little bit worse, this was the first fight scene of the film and I had an injury in my knee because I'd sprained the kneecap a month before. So I had to fight 18 people in a two-metre wide corridor, I've got shitty weapons, a guy on my shoulders, shitty boots and a broken knee.

The process is that Gareth [Evans, the director] gives us the situation, the location, the props and the amount of people in the scene. Then we

figure out the design. If it's a corridor space, when we do the practice in pre-production we'll have a two-metre gap between the crash mats so we know what the situation is like. After we figure out how skilled the fighters are, who's supposed to do what, who's carrying what weapons, then we all come in and design the content of the fight - the individual blocks and punches.

I find shooting action scenes much easier than drama because it's second nature to me - I'm more confident being able to channel the aggression level and expressions. I swing fast with kicks and punches, but screen fighting's a little different [to real fighting]. It's not really about hitting someone; even in full body contact, there's a pull back moment to create snap. We call it the "snap back". When there's a punch to the face, if the person reacts but your hand stays where it hits, it doesn't look good. But if your hand snaps back it looks better.

You're relying a lot on the stunt guys, too. As good as I am, I need the reaction from the guys to make me look even better. It all relies on the skill sets of the action guys and the stunt fighters who are taking the hits. If they don't sell it, it never looks good. It doesn't matter how good I am, we need both. Otherwise it's fucked."

DONNIE YEN

LEARN WHAT KUNG FU IS

After a decade of being the most successful martial arts star in Asia, Donnie Yen has been making a name for himself in Hollywood. He's got a new movie, *Flash Point*, out in theaters now, and he's got a new role as a choreographer on the new *Matrix* movie, *Matrix Reloaded*.

"I was always interested in 'cross training', or what we would now call 'MMA'—mixed martial arts. There was a period after 2000 when I went to work on Hollywood films [*Wing Chun*, *Indignance*, *Shanghai Knights*, *Stormbreaker*] when MMA as we know it really came into its own. There have actually been a number of films featuring MMA fighters, but most of them haven't really worked. The main problem is that even though the fighters know the techniques, the people choreographing them for the camera didn't understand how to shoot MMA for film.

"When I came back to Hong Kong to prepare another film, a cop actioner called *Kill Zone*, I realized that MMA-style techniques really suited the style of the film and the character I play in it. I think the MMA influence is especially evident in the final fight between myself and Sammo Hung. Of course, being an action movie, there are a lot of exaggerations that you won't find in the ring, but I think a lot of MMA guys appreciated the fact that we showed off some of their techniques on camera. In Hollywood, they shake the camera around during the fight, maybe to avoid showing the techniques too clearly. If you look at the fight in *Kill Zone*, the camera actually moves quite slowly; it's us that move fast in the

frame. That might sound obvious, but you really see it in American movie fights.

"I explored the cinematic potential of MMA even more in *Flash Point*, for which I wanted to shoot the ultimate mixed martial arts showdown between Collin (Chen) and myself. It almost killed me, but I think we came close. For *Flash Point*, I tried as much as possible to get away from 'martial arts movie' techniques and to ground everything in some kind of MMA reality. This meant taking more punishment than you would in a more stylized action film. Of course, it's not the same as taking a full power shot in the ring, but it can come close, and with multiple takes you get hit again and again. I was in front of and behind the camera, as both choreographer and star. This meant that I could position Collin and myself so we could highlight our strengths, and try to show the movements in a very 'clean' way.

"It felt more cohesive, in that it wasn't an MMA fighter trying to explain a technique to the choreographer, or a choreographer trying to teach MMA to an actor. Collin and I had both put in our years of training. He has a lot of experience on camera and, of course, it was my responsibility to pull all these elements together. I would say, overall, the end fight of *Flash Point* is the scene I've been most proud to choreograph. It's the fight that, when realized, came closest to my original vision, and I also remember very well how much we put into it. We really sweated and bled to shoot it, and I think that comes across in the finished film."

JEFF IMADA

Jason Bourne, *The Bourne Supremacy*, *The Bourne Ultimatum*
and *The Bourne Identity* (2002-2008)



A "There's as many favorite scenes that I could talk about. *Fight Club*, the *Bourne* series, *They Live*. It's really hard to give just one. But I guess *The Bourne Supremacy* and *The Bourne Ultimatum* stand out. I'm very proud of those movies. Having Matt [Bacon] do all the stunt movements himself was great. Because he's such an accomplished athlete he was able to pull off a lot of the moves even though he's not a trained martial artist. I think, overall, I was very proud of these films because I had the freedom to create everything from the ground up: where each break would be, what the characters would use as weapons, stuff like that. Being able to show off such a specific look and style was really rewarding.

"In *Supremacy* and *Ultimatum* the opponents weren't especially trained, and so just getting to train guys like Marlon Cooks a week or so before I had time with Matt was fun and also challenging. In *Ultimatum*, Edgar Ramirez had some previous training in martial arts, but not really that much, so I had to teach him to sell a punch and deliver a more realistic type of action, away from a lot of the flashy, showy stuff that was actually a big challenge, to have him be able to understand that he's supposed to be this new breed of Freedozone agent. It was a balance of having him do stuff a little bit differently but still as good or almost better than Matt. He didn't have very much onscreen fight experience and wasn't as solid an actor as Matt, so I had to bring him up to speed,

to really sell that he could possibly win in a fight between them.

"Another thing was being able to introduce household objects that could be used as a weapon. In *The Bourne Supremacy*, Matt uses a magazine as a weapon. I would go around looking at the set after it had been dressed and get an idea of what would be lying around and how it could be used as a weapon. I came up with the idea of using a rolled-up magazine and had to convince a few people that would actually be a functional weapon. I had to demonstrate it by rolling it up and hitting it into the table to show how hard the impact would be. And also, Matt and Marlon verified the fact that the magazine would definitely hurt because they'd be hitting each other in the arm before takes and would actually end up getting bruises from it.

"But was interesting because most people don't realize what you can use as a weapon. But that's a part of the character—something I love about Jason Bourne is that he's a guy who's trained well enough to be aware of his environment and everything that's around him. Plus, it's a reactionary thing because at that point in the movie he still doesn't know everything about himself, so it's something very organic that comes out of his training. I placed myself in the situation of the character and tried to really understand who the character is. I'd read the script, talk to the director and actor, and pick up character traits, then I'd put myself in the scene and I'd have my assistant or somebody just come at me and I would react to the situation. If I was a trained agent walking into that apartment, I would look around at my surroundings and recognize what I could use in a fight. You only have a second to make a decision, and I just happened to pick up the magazine and roll it up. It turned out to be one of those perfect moments." 

TRUENOISE: Blood loss leading to pallor, tachycardia (fast pulse), hypotension, postural drop in blood pressure (faintness) and severe abdominal pain from the irritation of the peritoneum by the blood inside the abdominal cavity.

PROGNOSIS Severe pain in ribcage. Possible perforated pleura and lung causing bleeding and air into the pleural cavity. Eventual tension pneumothorax; the lung on the injured side shifting over and compressing the other lung causing increasing shortness of breath, rapid unconsciousness and cardiac arrest.

CAUSE Thrashing
PROGNOSIS Pressure on windpipe resulting in fractured thyroid cartilage (Adam's apple) with bleeding and oedema (swelling) around the trachea. Stridor (an inability to breathe in without a loud rasping sound) and hypoxia (oxygen starvation) leading to unconsciousness.

PROGNOSIS: Posterior neck pain on palpation of spinous processes; limited range of motion; weakness, numbness or paresthesia (tingling) along affected nerve roots; inability to walk, incontinence of urine and feces; cessation of sexual function and sensation from chest down.

PROGNOSIS: Severing of jaw muscle and facial nerve, inability to close mouth, drooping in left side of face and saliva dribbling through left side of mouth.

PROGNOSIS Flattened or deviated nose with epistaxis (nose bleed) and obstruction to breathing from blood pooling under the surface of the cartilage.

See also: 8875.

PROGNOSIS See Hepatic rupture, plus hematuria (red blood in urine).

CAUSE Kicks and pushes to the abdomen.
PROGNOSIS See Hepatic rupture.

CAUSE Punched to face
PROGNOSIS Severe facial deformity and pain. Teeth loosened and falling out.

SECOND OPINION

Illustration by

Dream Doubles

We asked three of the UK's premier programmers for their top tips on how to set up the perfect late night double feature.

Nadia Attia, Michael Pierce

MIDNIGHT MOVIES

FIND THE PERFECT COMBINATION

Think about what films work well together - is there a theme or seed you want to explore? But more importantly, surprise people. Try mixing a classic with something more leftfield.

HOT JUST A DOUBLE BILL

Why stop at two features? Try screening unseen footage, a short film or themed trailers in between the movies.

INTERACT

At Midnight Movies, we reward fancy dress, encourage guests to pick the tunes and even draw on the walls. For the 'I Could Have Sworn Ali-Righten!' we provided a dressing up box, dance cards and routines. At the end of the day, if the audience don't get into the spirit they won't last beyond your first film.

DREAM DOUBLE...

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Paul Vickery

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If nobody is melling, cross-dressing, blowing shit up, eating human flesh, changing characters mid-film, fighting giant robots or beasts, becoming a social outcast or any mix of the above then maybe your films should be playing a little earlier in the evening.

KEEP THEM LUBRICATED

Once you start pushing past midnight, alcohol will fuel the fun while caffeine will keep the engine running. But a heady mix of both will conjure up a certain kind of feeling and emotion within your audience that will hopefully be matched by the mind-bending images you're throwing up on screen.

DREAM DOUBLE...

Without question, *Night of the Creeps* and *The Hecstar Squad*. Without seeing these two films as a kid, I'd like way better films today.

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Cinema audiences have long since succumbed to the irresistible allure of martial arts. But the identity of the early pioneers of onscreen violence might just surprise you.

THE FIRST ACTION HERO

Words by David Jenkins
Illustration by Paul K Johnson

In the late '60s, American artist/producer Harmony Korine had the bright idea of concocting an episodic, quasi-documentary entitled *Fight Men*. Its central conceit saw Korine picking fights with various, easily goaded Southern yahoos and, subsequently, being beaten to a hipster jaw for the amusement of the camera. The project was abandoned when Korine realised that his dinky fringe probably wouldn't endure a feature-length premiere. He also deduced that watching a real fight simply wasn't that interesting. They're such rare brutal that a stylised cinematic rendering would have us believe, and, if the

fighters are not equally matched, they're over within a matter of moments.

Places where the allure of the martial arts movie comes in. These films allow us to enjoy the careful choreography of violence, safe in the knowledge that there isn't (much) harm being done to the pugilists involved.

The joys of observing violent conduct onscreen go way back to the silent era, a medium that offered the perfect specifications for capturing the primal physicality of a good old barney. Charlie Chaplin's Keystone films - the shorts he starred in prior to developing his famous 'Little Tramp' persona - contained mayhem a-plenty. ■

n the late '80s, American artist/grankster Hershey Korine had the bright idea of concocting an episodic, quasi-documentary entitled *Fight Mark*. Its central conceit saw Korine picking fights with various, mostly graded Southern yahoos and, subsequently, being beaten to a pulp for the amusement of the camera. The project was abandoned when Korine realised that his dinky fringe probably wouldn't endure a feature-length pummelling. He also deduced that watching a real fight simply wasn't that interesting. They're much more brutal than a stylised cinematic rendering would have us believe, and, if the fighters are not equally matched, they're over within a matter of moments.

That's where the allure of the martial arts movie comes in. These films allow us to enjoy the careful choreography of violence, safe in the knowledge that there isn't (much) harm being done to the pugilists involved.

The joys of observing violent conduct screenroom go way back to the silent era, a medium that offered the perfect specifications for capturing the primeval physicality of a good old bawp. Chaplin's Keystone films - the shorts he starred in prior to developing his famous 'Little Tramp' persona - contained nigh-on-a-plenty.

Take, for example, 1914's *The Dockswal*, which was essentially a vehicle for tragic comedy star Roscoe 'Fatty' Arbuckle. Though it's Chaplin's fancy footwork that steals the show, Arbuckle plays a dim schloo who proves himself to be quite decent in a scrap when he beats a group of swarty vagabonds to a pulp. To impress a girl, he enters into a boxing match, with Chaplin acting as referee. It's hardly what you'd call high art, but the cinematic bout, filmed in a long, static medium shot and relying solely on the physical precision of the performers, is a joy.

But is there a film that lays claim to being the first ever martial arts movie? As China remains the world's largest exporter of the genre, it seems reasonable to expect that it was their thriving film industry that lit a torch now being carried by the likes of *Taiji Park*, *Run Wapling* and *Donnie Yen*.

One of the earliest  films was a film serial with the enticing title *Red Lotus Monastery*, directed by one Zhang Shichuan in 1928. In its entirety the film ran to 27 hours and was split into 18 separate chapters. It's been noted that the series would have continued, feeding a voracious public appetite. Were it not for the Nationalist government's growing suspicion about this newfangled 'movie' business, the Chinese Kuomintang government of the 1930s viewed martial

arts movies as incubators of violence and anarchy, and banned them. Production moved to Hong Kong and the rest, as they say, is history.

Legend of the Red Lotus Monastery starred Hu Die (aka Butterfly Wu), a glamorous Chinese moll who was, for a large part of the 1920s, one of China's biggest movie stars. Predisposing such waste classics as 1971's *A Touch of Zen* or Amy Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the film saw Hu play the wagh-notified 'Girl in Red', an enigmatic de-wander who could dance through clouds and treetops, and defeat her foes with a single mighty blow. The series is now sadly lost, feared destroyed, though it is often credited with being the lodestone of the modern martial arts movie.

And yet further investigation into the genre shows that China may not have been the first country to capture martial arts on film. A much earlier example can be found in, of all places, the UK, deriving from the quaint side streets of Barnsley in North London. The film, a staged newsreel recorded for French film company Gaumont and directed by Alf Collins, has the somewhat unworldly title of *Jiu Jitsu Down the Footpath* and hails from 1907. It stars Edith Garrud, and depicts two women pursuing pickpockets from Piccadilly to Hampstead before wrestling with them.

Madame Garrud was a professional martial arts instructor who courted fame by teaching jiu-jitsu to the Suffragettes so they could protect themselves from the fuzz. She would also allow her school to be used as a hideout. According to Elizabeth Crawford's book, *The Women's Suffrage Movement*, a reference guide, 1885-1928, Garrud's school was based in Argill Place, just off Oxford Circus, then later moved to Golden Square in Soho. She ran the school with her husband, William, and her skills included the ability to throw a 13-stone man even though Garrud reportedly stretched less than five-feet in her stockings.

In 'Gaius: A Despatch', an article written for *Health & Strength* magazine in July 1910, Garrud coined the term 'Jiu Jitsu-suffragettes' in reference to her growing cadre of combat-ready pupils. She also touted her methods as having the ability to 'repel the unwise advances of an incontinent stranger'. Beyond documenting the utility and necessity of self-defence, Garrud outlined her militant stance of feminism, suggesting that women needed to know how to ward off 'thieves and

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TIME TO DIE

What happens when you ask a bunch of people how they'd like to die? As captured by photographer David Houchengeringer, something very weird indeed.

Lessons learned from the 2008 financial crisis have led to a growing emphasis on the importance of financial literacy and responsible investing. This article explores the challenges and opportunities associated with promoting financial literacy and responsible investing, and offers suggestions for how these efforts can be more effectively implemented.

David Wrencheranger: Besides being great subjects of art, death and violence are everywhere around us - our TV shows us thousands a day. But the paradox is that we've never been so "death phobic". We don't want to hear or talk about it. Though we see it every day in fiction or in newscasts, we are completely disarmed in front of it. I just wanted to explore death and maybe help myself accept it, too.

Some people were shocked and don't understand why I've done it. But for me, art is not only made to be beautiful and buyable art is about exploring stuff. The objective wasn't to create a series that would sell. I wanted to put enough depth and detail in to make it interesting. And besides everything else, for once in my life I had the chance to kill people.

Pretty easy. An interesting thing for me was to let the models choose their own death. "Hi, you wanna pose for me? How can I kill you?" It was interesting that people mostly chose a brutal death, like, if they do this one as a fake, maybe a smoother one will happen later.

It's typically what I like in photography: to compose scenes on location and to take hours to work on lighting. I like the fact that if you work on every detail, some hardcore shoots can become interesting to watch.

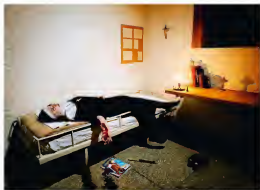
The hottest spot was the "Columbine" location. It was a Saturday in a high school and we shot without authorization. For sure, we wouldn't have done that in the US. During the exhibition in Paris, some people called the police because they thought it was real.

Tamara



Video





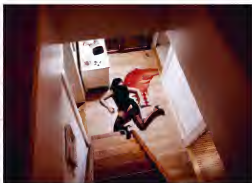
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CHAPTER



IN WHICH WE REVIEW

THE LATEST FILM RELEASES



Himizu

Directed by **Sion Sono**

Starring **Shôta Sometani, Fumi Nikaidô, Tetsu Watayama**

Released **June 1**

Himizu, the masterful new offering from Japanese director Sion Sono, unfolds in the aftermath of the 2011 tsunami and subsequent nuclear meltdown that devastated the filmmaker's home country. But according to this grim vision of Japanese society, things were contaminated long before the Fukushima disaster. A post-apocalyptic vision of a world gone mad, the film explores such personal Sono concerns as what it means to be young in a culture that both naturally promotes individual achievement and denies those very possibilities, and the lure of the death instinct which pulls individuals towards violence directed both outward and inward.

Living in a decrepit seaside shack with an indifferent mother, subject to periodic visits from a drunken father who returns only to beat him, 14-year-old Sumida (Shôta Sometani) is left more or less to fend for himself. He's stired up money the family's best rental business by the warm community of squatters—men and women displaced by the tsunami—whom he allows to set up tents on his family's property. But mostly Sumida wants to be left alone to live a normal life and escape both the cycles of violence that plague nearly all the film's familial and romantic relationships, and the presence of society, reeled by the boy's schoolteacher, towards individual exceptionalism. Against that man's insistence

that the Japanese are a people who rise from disaster to achieve great things, Sumida asserts that he wants nothing more than to be "ordinary", to be "another happy not unhappy".

But even such a modest goal proves impossible and with his trademark flights of insane violent invention, Sono shows us how Sumida never had a chance. Exactly executed radio set pieces abound, as when a pair of characters rob and kill a make-loving neo-Nazi. As does an air of general menace, signified by the preponderance of butchered, knife-wielding young men that seem to dominate the urban landscape. "Who are I?" asks one of these youthful criminals. It's a question echoed in a poem repeated several times throughout the film, and one that confronts an entire society whose uncertainty and violent tendencies are traced back, via the teacher's monologue, at least as far as World War II. It is, furthermore, an especially pressing question in the aftermath of the recent disaster.

Sumida's answer to his own existential cross is to become a righteous avenger, perversely giving way to a misguided activism. In Sono's film a death instinct often wins—and it brings—over a call to life. The most concentrated example of this struggle, which isn't much of a struggle at all, comes in his 2010 film *Cold Fish*, where threatened method gives way to

gruesome violence. The mayhem is only a tad less explicit in *Himizu*, but it's a much less nihilistic exercise than his earlier movie. The loss of a (creepily) selfless girl and a community of caring outsiders point the way forward, but as the endlessly retorted shots of a field of post-tsunami rubble remind us, any optimism Sono allows to creep into his extraordinary film is provisional at best. **Andrew Schenker**

ANTICIPATION. Those familiar with Sono's previous films know what to expect, but how will the director deal with the recent natural and nuclear meltdown that devastated his country?

4

ENJOYMENT. Sono's facility with comically violent—and usually over-the-top—set-piece makes his film head-shaking delights without diluting his seriousness of purpose.

4

IN RETROSPECT. A retrospective from one of the most significant directors working today, *Himizu* combines all the director's strengths while introducing a tentative humanism that proves remarkably affecting.

4



The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp (1943)

Directed by **Michael Powell, Eric Prendergast**
 Starring **Roger Livesey, Deborah Kerr, Anton Walbrook**
 Released **May 15**

Roger Livesey, who played three lead roles for Michael Powell and Eric Prendergast (including, here, the outcasted military officer Clive "Sugar" Wynne-Candy VC, aka *The Blimp*) was a character actor of solid good looks, even when bulled up, half-shaved and prematurely aged in this superlative and sweeping drama. He is entirely plausible as the late House Guard Army Commander who attempts to drown an inept young officer, having been upstaged and arrested for applying unorthodox thinking in advance of military maneuvers. Livesey possesses vitality, sympathy and presence. But this vitality was not necessarily false, for did his presence evoke the usual sort of leading-man charisma.

Emotional intelligence is one of the defining qualities exhibited by the team of Powell and Prendergast, but in *Colonel Blimp*, they arguably fashioned a film where no character shows it. Except, perhaps, the elite German cavalry officer, Theodor Krotschmar-Schulckoff, movingly played by Anton Walbrook. Tracking back some 40 years, we witness Candy befriending Krotschmar-Schulckoff following a subtle duel. The German, in turn, falls for Candy's English friend, Miss Hunter (played by Deborah Kerr in one of three roles she performs in the film).

Krotschmar-Schulckoff announces his affection to Candy, who begs Miss Hunter in compensation. Her reaction is in a whirlwind the camera barely catches her as she cuts down her eyes. It is a moment the audience

could easily miss (Candy certainly does), the emotional turning point of the movie expressed in the fleeting fluttering of an eyelid.

It is here that the filmmakers confront us with a question: what importance should we place on an individual's lost opportunity for love against the grand march of time, through the exigencies of war and the chaotic carnal of death? But it is not the only thorny themeate issue raised by *Blimp* as Powell and Prendergast ponder the competing demands of honor and efficiency, love and duty, the meaning of patriotism and national identity, the relative value of experience and enthusiasm, nationalism and humanitarianism. Characteristically, the directors offer few, if any, answers.

As a film, it doesn't settle. Employing the most audacious and complex flashback structure in the 45-year history of Powell and Prendergast's production company, *The Archers*, *Blimp* battles its way from the temptations of emotional exploitation into the world of action.

During shooting, Churchill's War Department denied both permissions and resources to anyone production, but not such as you would notice. Georges Pernez's Technicolor cinematography may not miss the delicious color-drenched romances Jack Cardiff was encouraged to develop in the immediate post-war trilogy of *A Matter of Life and Death*, *Black Narcissus* and *The Red Shoes*, but the film is very beautiful nonetheless.

Its interior sets (quite often studio-bound and designed by the great Alfred

Junge) produce effects that are of a piece with the evocative expressions of the aesthetic and psychological impact on man by his environment, a developing hallmark of Powell and Prendergast's work together.

In fact, it is the film's very refusal to settle — its indeterminacy — that sets it apart. Few films in British history can rival (quite a deep breath) the sheer cinematic vision, the scope, the philosophical depth, cinematic elan, subtlety of expression, the collaborative audacity or sense of experimentation of *Colonel Blimp*. But for all its artifice — a quality that the filmmakers embraced rather than mitigated against — its major achievement is that it catches life on the wing, that sense of the complexity of lived experience, of what it feels like to be a lone individual, like Candy, swept along by, but surviving, the changing winds of history. It is for this reason it deserves to be considered among the greatest achievements of any British filmmakers. **Wally Hammond**

ANTICIPATION. A major restoration of a cherished British epic

5

ENJOYMENT. Watching it now, there's something perfectly suspect about *Blimp*

4

IN RETROSPECT. Staggering and heart-breaking S&L

5

Béla Tarr

The last laugh

Words by Simon Jebeleski

Select Filmography

Béla Tarr

The Turin Horse (2011)

The Man from London (2007)

Werckmeister Harmonies (2000)

Sötétvíz (1994)

Demencia (1984)

Autumn Almanac (1980)

The Prefect People (1982)

Family Heat (1977)

"I've lost my honour," is how Hungarian director Béla Tarr – a very minimalist, minimalist smile stretched across his face – announces his retirement in his last, measured, growl.

Though he delivers this statement with a dead, stony, the news that one of this generation's most unique talents will never direct a film again has a number close to it. For a start, at 57 years old, surely he's far too young?

"I did realize for 30 years I started from somewhere and I nearly arrived back. With *The Turin Horse*, the circle is closed. Now the work is done, I have a feeling I have said everything that I wanted to."

There is some truth in this remark. In *The Turin Horse*, a father and daughter go through the economy of existence with only a derelict cottage as protection from the punishing elements, and a dying horse as their sole hope for survival. It echoes a streak of lonely bleakness first seen in his 1977 debut, *Family Heat*.

Both films rest on the brink of nihilism and lack one of the most enthralling and overlooked aspects of Tarr's work: his masterwork sense of humour. "Every good thing has comedy because you never see both sides of life," he says. "You cannot just show tragedy. I had to tell you, in *The Man from London*, I had humour and I could say I did comedies. I had a feeling that you can always laugh at it. During *The Outside* and *Autumn Almanac* you can laugh a lot. In *Werckmeister Harmonies* you can laugh not too much. Now, in *The Turin Horse*, we cannot laugh."

Tarr's remarkable question sees his slowly climb the ranks of European auteur cinema. With *The Turin Horse*, he could trade blows with any directoral visionary you'd care to mention. He is best known for his employment of long takes – as seen in 1994's jaw-dropping, seven-hour masterpiece, *Sötétvíz* – which he uses to support his brooding, morose storytelling style.

You don't have to speak to Tarr for long to realize that he is disgusted by the idea of making a film motivated by anything other than

personal conviction. "I really don't want to be a kicked-off, shiny, bourgeois film director. It's a comfortable job and you're famous. If I do one more film, it will look like a profession, and I don't want that. Of course I can do some more films, but then I'm just repeating and doing copies. This is not my style."

Despite the political undercurrent within many of Tarr's films, especially the so-called "Proletariat Trilogy", his first three features that all focus on the plight of the derelict and down-trodden, they never feel overly didactic.

"When making *Family Heat*, I was of course a very strong leftist and I was totally against the whole fake socialism which, then, was a kind of socialism. I was always on the side of the ugly, miserable, humiliated people. My first movie just wanted to show you how they are, how they have life and dignity and humility and nobody has the right to destroy them. Of course I felt that, but not in a political way. This is a question of social sensitivity. Politics is a utility, dirty, ugly business. It has to be much deeper than just taking political sides."

The Turin Horse is a demanding film, opening with an anecdote about Nietzsche that inspired the film's title. It concerns the philosopher's descent into madness after seeing a horse being beaten in Turin. "Everybody knows how it was with Nietzsche. But our question was what has happened to the horse?"

It is of little surprise that Tarr originally wanted to become a philosopher, an impulse articulated in his films in various degrees. *Werckmeister Harmonies* uses harmonic dissonance to ponder aesthetics and religion, while *downside*, in such works as *The Outside*, he explicitly voices the discomforts of the working class.

But for the deafening wind, *The Turin Horse* stands apart from his previous films due to its minimal use of dialogue. As such, there's a tendency to search the lonely silence for subtext or metaphor, a tendency Tarr is keen to shoo down.

"Filmmaking is a very primitive job. If you see a movie you cannot see any metaphors or

symbols or allegories because film is concrete. Words are not concrete pictures. You always see concrete actions. Everything is concrete."

This ideology underpins the sincerity of both his approach and his films. If you're looking beyond the screen for meaning, you are looking in the wrong place. Tarr forgets the entire beginning and end of the world, as is evident in his explanation of the *Turin Horse*. "It's very simple. If you are across a river and all you have in a home, every day making your money with this horse, and your horse grows up, so just see how the horse is getting weaker and weaker. In parallel, the world is also getting weaker and weaker because the world is getting smaller and smaller. And for the human characters in this film, this is the end and the end of the world when the horse starts to die."

Music is an integral aspect of Tarr's cinema and he never uses it as a cheap device to accentuate emotion. Mihály Vig is Tarr's regular composer and he has used him for every film since 1980's *Autumn Almanac*. "I like to know the music before the shooting, because the music, like the set and the landscape, is one of the main characters. It has a face. This is terribly important. It is like scouting for the location. If I don't know the whole score before shooting, it comes in the stupid film score category which is a place of shit. When a director is not able to create music to just rate the musician and they watch the screen and play the music. For me, that's ridiculous."

Though he puts the concrete world on the screen, he is keen never to impose his own values. His central characters are nearly wholly virtuous or monstrous. More often they are a combination of the two. The suggestion that *The Turin Horse* could be perceived as sad stories. "When I was watching it, I didn't feel sad, no. I think 'nature' is not a good word. I have no courage to say if something is good or bad, or something is happy or sad, because if you see a thing which you call sad, you find beauty immediately. In the middle of the big sadness, you could find something which is truly beautiful."



The Turin Horse

Directed by **Béla Tarr, Ágnes Hranitzky**
 Starring **Janos Dancs, Erika Bok, Mihály Karmos**
 Released June 1

Somewhat fleetingly, and with tongue placed firmly in cheek, the Irish literary critic Thomas Mann wrote that with *Waiting for Godot*, Samuel Beckett had "achieved a theatrical impossibility—a play in which nothing happens, that yet keeps audiences glued to their seats. What's more, since the second act is a subtly different reprise of the first, he has written a play in which nothing happens, twice!"

What might he have made of *The Turin Horse*, the most theatrical feature from Hungarian colossus Béla Tarr? Surely he'd admire the cynical nature of a descent into darkness in which nothing happens, six times.

In much the same way that only a supinely gifted wordsmith such as Beckett could transform sad nothingness into the most intoxicating of goosepans, Tarr's uncompromising formal control ensures that *The Turin Horse* remains nothing short of riveting. Narratively stark and possessing an austerity of tone that enriches the absolute moments of levity present in 2009's *Werckmeister Harmonies* or his previous opus from 2006, *Sátántangó*, this supposedly final film continues to explore such notions as the immutability of human nature, the futility

of resistance against predetermination, and the inescapable stasis dealt by the curbs of fate. These thematic preoccupations have long characterized Tarr's work and are made especially bleak in this case by the debilitating drudgery of survival that negates even the concept of hope.

A characteristically dawning opening sequence sees a lone farmer driving his horse through a typhoon of Old Testament proportions. Later, we're introduced to the farmer's daughter and the oppressive routine of the pair's daily chores, underscored by the recurring dirge of Mihály Mészáros score.

With little curls announcing the passing of days, the same scenes occur with subtle but increasingly significant and monumental shifts in perspective. Close-ups of weathered faces reveal no trace of emotion. With conversation non-existent, character and relationships are defined through action, the few words between the pair are exchanged with perfunctory haste. A single scene with a passing neighbor, stopping by to share a glass of moonshine and some worldly wisdom, offers perhaps the one chance to read some higher purpose into these lives led without significance. But beyond such sleepless cycles of repetition, the father soon

discovers any question of transcendence with a forcefully abrupt, "Come off it! That's rubbers!"

As the well dries up and the stallions horse-rebels to move, Tarr smites the pair further towards the literal darkness that will finally envelop them. Whether the cinematic rupture of the final moments are to be considered subliminal or explicit—full of hope or much capacity for survival or weighed down in resignation at the ultimate pointlessness of existence—is a question for each viewer to decide for themselves. Whatever way you look at it, though, if this does prove to be Tarr's last film, one couldn't ask for a more masterful, purely cinematic coda to this singular and most Beckettian filmmaker's astonishing career. **Matthew Thrall**

ANTICIPATION, A new film by Béla Tarr is the cinematic event of any year

ENJOYMENT, To masquerade Woody Allen's "Potatoes...A lot of potatoes. A tremendous amount of potatoes."

IN RETROSPECT, A magnificent, towering achievement.

5
4
5



Faust

Directed by Aleksandr Sokolov

Starring Johannes Zeller, Anton Adasinsky, Isolda Dychauk

Released May 11

Some sage advice came out of Aleksandr Sokolov's delicious and proudly grotesque tale on Goethe's *Faust*: never mix essential bits of dandelion and asparagus with lyrical love. Not unless you want a disaster filled with a half-burned weeping baby swimming in an electric pink slurry.

Blowing already estimated the estimate lives of Lenin (Thomas), Hitler (Mitsch) and Hushito (The Sun), Sokolov sounds his *Tetralogy of Power* with a ghastly, agonizing plunge into the desolate soul of glibby scholar Faust (Johannes Zeller), who is ready to make a pact with the devil in order to recede fame, knowledge and pleasures of the flesh. But where those previous films concentrated more on the corrupting influence of power on those who have attained it, *Faust* glances at power from the opposite angle, as a driver for temptation, sin and self-hatred.

As the camera plunges down from the heavens in the film's magical opening shot, it eventually swoops into a glibby Goethean lair, through a window and straight onto the petrified goitral of a male catfish in the process of being disemboweled. At this point in his life, Faust has come to realize that he

is bent on all sides by spider and snuffing, and the large remainder of the film comprises a periodic, wandering dialogue with a Satanic moneylender (Anton Adasinsky) who bears an uncanny resemblance to Count Drak in Murnau's *Nosferatu*.

A thoroughly deserving winner of the Golden Lion at the 2011 Venice Film Festival, Sokolov's snappy opus is long, strictly and appears to avoid making too many obvious concessions to plot. Yet it would be disingenuous to call this a difficult film, as it consistently hams with detail and mystery, and there's hardly a moment where the hovering camera lingers on any one face or object for too long. The clever and snapping tonal shifts, too, keep you locked into the central struggle, modulating between the scatological, the laudatory, the anguished and the strangely moving, sometimes within a single shot.

Faust is a breathtaking film, even if its sublime technical achievements do tend to occasionally suffocate the pristine simplicity of the tale it's telling. Even though this is, in essence, a critique of human fallibility, the cinematic world which Sokolov conceals in fantastical to its core, with madmen and including a peek through a telescope

at a flower crawling on the moon, a tavern whose walls leak with wine that tastes of donkey piss, a funeral service cooing by stray house, and Germany's greatest living female actress, Hanna Schygalla, dressed in grossly defying Kotex's grip-up and during luncheon through various scenes. In terms of the way in which Sokolov constructs Faust's environment, imagine *Guillermo del Toro's* ghost-eye-view cinema gliding through a glibby Gothic hinterland created by a drunk Jan Svankmajer, and you're almost there. **David Jenkins**

ANTICIPATION. Winner of a major festival prize, but Sokolov can sometimes be a tough watch

4

DISAPPOINTMENT: A head-spinning descent into hell that boasts a grotesque, earthy beauty reminiscent of Pasolini's *Telling of Tales*

4

IN RETROSPECT. A journey you'll want — nay, need — to take more than once in order to soak up its many (infinite) layers of detail

4

Your Sister's Sister

Directed by Lynn Shelton

Starring Mark Duplass, Emily Morter, Rosemarie DeWitt

Released June 19

Jack (Mark Duplass) treats his late brother's memory with a barbed enigma before a bundle of Mark's shoddy middle-class piffle in a cozy Seattle apartment. "Welcome somewhere country," he might as well say. Jack's been off by this initial misanthropy, though, because *Your Sister's Sister*, writer-director Lynn Shelton's fourth feature, drags mumblecore's lo-fi mania onto a new plane.

Immediately speaking, there's note of the left-field charm of Shelton's joyful mumblecore since 2009, *Amusement*, or the *Brooklyn Brothers*' 2005 meta indie, *Highland Lull*. It's Jack's dead brother's ex) and Hannah (Emily Morter) return to the girl's family cabin for a long weekend of soul soothing, only to become entangled in an emotionally *sub merge* a first before belching, breaking down and eventually making up.



This is an unashamed study of friendship, family, love and loss delivered in a understated, largely improvised and sitcom package. A rustic room can't for those fatigued from overexposure to the frothy mewing of Kate Hudson and bargain bucket saccharine Katherine Heigl.

Much of its success is down to the cast. Mark Duplass and Emily Morter spent months going to know their characters in pre-production, although, remarkably, Rosemarie DeWitt stepped in just three days before the 10-day shoot commenced after the original actress booked to play Hannah dropped out at the eleventh hour. All three share an authentic chemistry, but the real star is Shelton's warm, unshowy and tremendously funny screenplay.

Just when the loose conversational structure begins to gain momentum, however, Shelton breaks away from coffee table discourse and

takes a step into the great outdoors. Turning her lens to the spectacular, Douglas fir-encrusted vistas that neighbor the cabin, Shelton shows that she's got a third for adventure as well as an eye for dysfunctional comedy. Yet we'll reach sooner have more snappy dialogue and awkward between-fumbling and less exterior pretensionation next time. **Adam Woodward**

ANTICIPATION It's a small, quiet, and... 3

ENJOYMENT Likable enough, but... 3

IN RETROSPECT Despite the... 3

Polisse

Directed by Mattiocci

Starring Martin Vio, Joey Starr, Marina Fois

Released June 15

Polisse is a beautifully compiled portfolio containing crude, unforced snapshots of life behind-the-scenes at a Child Protection Unit in Paris, witnessed by an over-the-top photojournalist as played by Marina Fois. The film's writer and director (recalling a knowing throwback to the terse TV-cop dramas of the '70s and '80s (*Mid Street* Man, for instance) rather than the slick and smug *Boys of Crime* *Scare Sense* journalism and its schlocky-saying ilk, the film's unadorned, docu-matter viewer lends the drama an appealing immediacy which allows for swift immersion into the team's chaotic task.

With no single central character, *Polisse* this anti-hero between cases, busy relationships and genuine the raw total of which aims to document both the horrendous acts these officers must deal with as well as their personal lives as they cope with them out. *Polisse* becomes *IN* emblematic of the early Dogma-98 movies, *Polisse* is a subtle, downright barely with the



film's fresco approach to narrative and its array of impressive, naturalistic performances.

Even though many of the anecdotes within the film are based on real cases, it does, however, become less credible the more we get to know the characters. Shocking as they may initially seem, scenes such as one in which a young girl admits to being raped into dispensing blowjobs in order to retrieve her smartphone, inviting belches of laughter from the paired officers, surely feel inappropriate and carelessly dramatized. Elsewhere, a bourgeois father accused of abusing his daughter evokes a wily confidence in front of the officers and swiftly receives a slap. Would these trained professionals really be so quick to violence?

There's little emphasis placed on the long that the very people whose occupation it is to safeguard abused children aren't able to bring up their own. Marina Fois' life follows a way her marriage as a result of her thwarted sex sessions, unconsciously scheduled during

periods of police ferocity. Karin Vio's Marine loses custody of her children early in the film. Two officers even give up their kids to pursue a love affair. You might also be advised to walk out of the cinema five minutes before the film ends in order to spare yourself one of the most vulgar and klutzy final shots in a long, long, long time. **David Jenkins**

ANTICIPATION A box office smash in France and a prize-winner in Cannes, despite tepid early reviews. 3

ENJOYMENT You've got to go to it. 3

IN RETROSPECT Even though it crumbles under any close scrutiny, you feel there would be scope for a less hysterical sequel. 2

A Royal Affair

Directed by **Nikolaj Arcel**

Starring **Wode Mikkelsen**,
Mikkel Boe Følsgaard, **Alicia Vikander**
Released June 18



Sex, death, power, intrigue, corruption, *Rosencrantz* and several others of *The Killing*: *A Royal Affair* hasn't all it's also based on a true story which, incredibly, has never been adapted for film before: that of Caroline Mathilde, the 16-year-old English princess who, in 1706, was paired off to wed the newly crowned Danish king. She arrives alone, armed with a single nugget of motherly advice: "If you can get the king to visit your bedchamber on the first evening, you'll be perceived as a great success."

Caroline (Alicia Vikander) doesn't hang about. Within hours she's charming the socks off the Danish court with her wit, beauty and enviable harpsichord skills. And sure enough, King Christian (Mikkel Boe Følsgaard) does come knocking — though only after having publicly humiliated his new bride in a flash of childish spite, which does about as much to calm seeking night naves as a boat of herpes.

The arrival on the scene of Johann Friedrich Struensee (Mads Mikkelsen), a political radical

who becomes Christian's personal physician, speeds their doomed pairing towards disaster. The ensuing power struggles within their marriage and throughout the Danish court, poised between self-serving reactionaries and dawning Enlightenment ideals, are forged together in a dense latticework by director Nikolaj Arcel.

While Mikkelsen and Vikander are both excellent, Følsgaard stands out with a dynamic performance that has Christian emerge as a hostage to fortune rather than the petulant bully he initially appears. Whimsically indulged and emotionally unengaged, Christian takes to calling Caroline "mother," interrupts theatre performances to quote dialogue he's memorized, and in the same breath, moves from passionately advocating improved state-wide disposal to denouncing his dissonant an honorary member of the council chamber. The fate of Struensee, doctor-turned-advisor to a capricious monarch, is similar to that

of James McQueen's doomed character in *The Last King of Scotland*.

Arcel's film succeeds by prizing characterization over historical detail, establishing the central trio as red-blooded, complex individuals, each driven by their passions and given to misunderstanding at times. They are never reduced to mere pawns on a historical chessboard. **Sophie Ivan**

ANTICUMTION. Scooped amonglay and acting prizes at Berlin earlier this year, so definitely worth a look-in.

3

ENJOYMENT. Gripping, smart, well-acted—everything you want in a period drama.

4

IN RETROSPECT. A bit like *The Duchess*, but better. Denmark is so hot right now.

4

Woody Allen: A Documentary

Directed by **Robert B. Weide**

Starring **Woody Allen**, **Larry Anonson**,
Antonio Bondeville
Released June 8



A less-than-jam-cuff dart of piano and bassoon accompanies a dusky establishing shot of the Fifth Street Bridge that's followed by a quick-fire montage of pedestals, pigeons and yellow cabs. "Writing is the great life," chimes a familiar voice. Why, it's our old pal Woody Allen, laid out across a bed scribbling his thoughts on a yellow notecard. Let's listen on... "In the room, everything you write is great, but when you go out and do it, all your schemes about making a masterpiece are reduced to, 'I'll prostitute myself anyway I have to survive this catastrophe!'"

Forty years and as many features into his career, you can forgive the 71-year-old New Yorker for seeming self-deprecating and near Acher all, here is a filmmaker who has given his life to cinema, maintaining a timeless work ethic and remarkable degree

of artistic control. Sure, there have been a few "chickens" (as Mankiewicz's *Harold Heald* quips it) but Woody never lets the critics get him down.

This is the concisest sentiment of Robert B. Weide's compact and stylish biography, a film that chronologically lays out the facts but fails to find anything new or profound to say about Allen or his substantial body of work. We learn, for example, how a teenage Allan Konigsberg went from charming out funnies for a string of weekly columns to becoming a household name in the 1960s doing TV stand-up, but his difficult transition to movie director is largely skated over.

And after lingering on his unsurpassed late-'70s triumphs *Annie Hall* and *Manhattan*, we belatedly hopscotch over the next few decades, bringing us right up to the present day

where Weide vainly recycles on-set anecdotes from the casts of *Match Point*, *You Will Meet a Tall Dark Stranger* and *Midnight in Paris*. All the while his subject is restricted to the sidelines, popping up apocryphally to point out his favorite childhood haunts and offer the briefest of glimpses into his creative process. How disappointing. **Adam Woodward**

ANTICUMTION. Who doesn't have a soft spot for Woody Allen?

3

ENJOYMENT. Erring and unbalanced.

3

IN RETROSPECT. Must remember to dig out that *Annie Hall* DVD.

2



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Michel Ocelot

Shadow play

Interview by Adam Woodward

Michel Ocelot

Cinematography

Tales of the Night (2003)

Azur & Asmer: The Princess' Guest (2008)

Kirikou and the Wild Beasts (2008)

Princes and Princesses (2008)

Kirikou and the Sorceress (1998)

"I in a glutton in a poetry shop. I have to have it all," exclaims a voracious Michel Ocelot. "I want to taste everything, to sample every flavour from it, especially those I have yet to try." Despite the 46-year-old French animator's avowed tooth for chocolate delirium, it's not the cuisine that's got him rhapsodising. More a cultural omnivore-ducer he's been pretty savoring his entire career.

Rumored the French Riviera, Ocelot relocated to Galesen with his family at a young age before moving to France's Aquitaine region in his early teens. Though brief, the time he spent learning to read, write and, most significantly, draw on the westernmost tip of Africa would have the single greatest impact on his creative outlook. "It was very interesting at such a young age to belong to two very different worlds," Ocelot explains. "At that time, Africa and Europe did not know the other existed, but I knew I opened my mind to different cultures and religions. It was a good base for my life, to be able to understand early on about all the complexities and differences that exist in the world."

"Really, I am a citizen of the world," he continues. "I don't have only Africa and France in my veins; I'm happy in many places. I always remember the beauty and the colour of those places of my youth." As an adolescent, Ocelot recalls "constantly sketching, drawing, cutting out shapes and playing with puppets with my brothers and sisters." He would make these little gifts and regularly put on homemade toy theatre productions to "spread some happiness to them." And later, with a handful of friends, he began studying art and experimenting with a variety of animation techniques.

During this formative period, Ocelot admits that he "hoped about Africa," yet the continent, which so fervently kindled his imagination as a boy, wouldn't turn a hair in this way in the late '80s. After producing a succession of shorts in the

late '70s and throughout the '80s, which proved hugely popular both on French television and at various European film festivals – he picked up a RAMPART in 1994 for his 15-minute cartoon gem *The Snow Beast* – Ocelot released his directorial feature debut, *Kirikou and the Sorceress*, in 1998. A traditional animation inspired by West African folklore, *Kirikou* announced Ocelot on the world stage and simultaneously yielded a misconception that follows him to this day. "Because of the film's success and because of its African aesthetic, people just assumed I was African," he explains.

Few animators are as proficient with as wide a range of animation mediums as Ocelot, yet what's most impressive is that he is entirely self-taught. But why does he continue to flirt between disciplines, from hand-drawn to silhouette and CGI? "In the beginning I was broke and I always chose the cheapest way to make animation," he reveals. "Now I'm pretty successful, at least in France, and I can afford almost any technique I want." In the case of *Tales of the Night*, his latest silhouette feature and first silhouette animation since 2003's *Princes and Princesses*, Ocelot explains that he wanted to "come back to the simplicity of the black silhouette because it is very unified – you don't reveal everything, the viewer has to fill in a lot of the detail and it's a great way to tell a story."

Here's the thing about Ocelot: whatever style of animation he employs, however vibrant his flash palette, the story he's telling always manages to shine through. Whether evident in a newborn African child's plight to save his village from an evil witch, a prince's endeavor to rescue an enchanted princess or a woman's quest to find true love, the breadth of narrative knowledge Ocelot has acquired through his appetite for all artforms, all countries and cultures, marks him as a master storyteller. "We have within reach every civilisation and every time that there has ever been," he says.

"Once I dip into another culture it is impossible for me not to use it. I am obsessed with reading and sharing stories. I want to surprise and satisfy people. So it's interesting to go to other places and to tell a story which does not come from you but which you want to share with the world. *Tales of the Night* is me telling those stories when my wife, because it's the best way for me to learn about other people and places."

There's another aspect to Ocelot's feisty directorial approach, however. As a fiercely independent animator of international repute, Ocelot is one of a small few still challenging the kiddie-friendly Holy Trinity of Disney, Pixar and Studio Ghibli. "I've always been very strong-minded and independent. Even at an early age, when someone would offer me a coloring book I wouldn't like it because I could already draw – I didn't need the lines to be filled in. I decide the colours, where the lines should be."

"When I was small there was only Walt Disney," he continues. "It took me a long time to realise that all over the world there were real people like me making wonderful little films without wondering or really caring whether they would sell or not. Walt Disney is okay, but his success condemned all animators to have to make children's films if they wanted to have similar success. My early films were certainly not for children, and I think it's a shame that these restrictions still apply."

Might we soon see a more adult-themed Ocelot venture – something more in line with the film that inspired him to become an animator, Bertha Tjörkell's 1946 anti-Nazi short *The Road of Dogs*? Don't count on it. "I have the power to make beauty and to give a little happiness to the world, and here it I think beauty is dreadful. Reading the newspaper is the most terrible, depressing thing you can do. Why would I want to add badness on top of badness? If you see my film and feel even a little lightness and happiness then I've done my job."



Tales of the Night

Directed by **Michel Ocelot**

Starring **Julien Benzoni, Marina Orliet, Michel Elias**

Releases **May 25**

In a random Persian cinema late at night, an elderly writer and two spirited young actors weave a rich fairy-tale tapestry with the help of a little magic and a lot of imagination. Taking it in turns, the boy and girl feed their ideas into a whirling, flapping machine before being transported to a succession of exotic and ancient foreign lands.

It's a delightful slice of French animation luminary Michel Ocelot will know all too well. This episodic, folktale-inspired structure is, after all, identical to both 2000's *Princes and Princesses* and his made-for-TV 1992 feature debut, *Les Contes de la Nuit*. Not chiding Ocelot for recycling past material would be like complaining there's too many Purple Ones in your box of Quality Street.

That's the truly magical thing about Ocelot's films: however familiar the package, the content is rendered with such passion, nuance and wit that it's impossible not to be swept away. So while *Tales of the Night* sees Ocelot operating well within his comfort zone, the craftsmanship on show is as least intricate as ever.

From the 18th-century Court of Burgundy to an indigenous Caribbean island, in

tribal Africa and a mythical Aztec city of gold, there are distinct traces of Aesop and Kipling in Ocelot's past-as-writer, past-as-animator folktale. Suitably, each story is brought to life using a computer-generated version of a silhouette technique that in itself over a century old. Far from being a cheap man-of-strawards self-indulgence, however, *Tales of the Night* is a film of remarkable depth and colour, each character and setting combined in an intoxicating ballet of shadow and light.

It's this artistic individuality that has been so crucial in sustaining Ocelot's success over the past two decades. Contemporary feature animation is rife with coddly, celebrity-voiced CGI critters and one-capped seasonal fluff. That's not to suggest the likes of Disney, Pixar and DreamWorks Animation are lacking in the charm department, more that there's a surface uniformity to the family-friendly output of the major animation studios.

In recent years, the likes of Magique Sarrajs (*Persepolis*), Ari Folman (*Waltz With Bashir*) and Eric Khoo (*Annex*) have triumphantly reacquainted independent animation's progressive glow that Ocelot's ultra-traditional

style makes him an easy target for those who prefer their animation with a figurative finger on the social pulse.

None of the six vignettes comprised within *Tales of the Night* features a female protagonist – each one is centred on an intrepid prince's endeavour to liberate a princess or subjugate princess (often with an ulterior motive). There are darker instances of narrative aversion. Yet the conviction with which each and every frame is infused with such vitality, such meticulous splendour, means that even the most hard-nosed cynic will be left with eyes opened and heart warmed. **Adam Woodward**

ANTICIPATION In the realm of independent contemporary animation, Ocelot is king



ENJOYMENT A uniquely joyful experience from a true original



IN RETROSPECT Long live the king



ill Manors

Directed by **Ben Drew**

Starring **Riz Ahmed, Natalie Press,**

Anwaruka Mond

Released **May 6**



ill Manors is a portrait of a broken-down lives on the dark corners of Port Geste, Manor Park and Randon Road, peeped over by the palaces of the 2012 Olympic Games.

Ben Drew, also known as Plan B, has fashioned himself as the voice of London's margins. *ill Manors* — a rare, urban and variant of the musical film — is tough, angry and volatile, a microscopic look at the frenetic root of last summer's riots and a microscopic "fuck you" to the political classes. It's a call of protest in the best traditions of socially conscious hip-hop.

Along like a Greek chorus but sounding a lot like Eminem, Drew introduces each of his major characters with a slice of rhythm and poetry. We learn of abandoned foster care and parents with a needle in their arm, of child-soldier gangs skipping dope, and then immigrants forced into prostitution.

Our tour-guide through this "urban safari" is Aunna (Riz Ahmed), a Fiat-Locker-club drug-pusher with wide, innocent eyes and a face like a lioness cub. He's a conscientious soul, almost despite himself, and his unwillingness to accept the very worst of this poverty-stricken world provides *ill Manors* with its major plot points.

As a filmmaker, storyteller and dissenting voice, Drew still has a way to go. Here, his attempts to fuse slice-of-life with stake-of-nation, while showcasing his Tarantino-like ability to figure disparate stories into one, feels incoherent and unresolved. With its time-lapsed cityscapes and frenetic montages, *ill Manors* doesn't quite do enough to escape from the shadow of other state-funded genre works like *Neil Clarke's Kidulthood*, *Paul Dill's Belief* and *Mo'Nish Short*.

In a lecture he delivered for TED, Drew said, "And then the riots happened, right? We've got a generation of youths out there on the

streets. The weather is hot. It's race. They can't get nothing to do because all the community centers have been shut down." The complexities behind these are evident in his film. But *ill Manors*, nevertheless, is a guttural call from a place that, for most of us, remains as remote as a jungle. **Tom Geary**

ANTICIPATION. Great tune and TED lecter are built early buzz for this debut film.

3

ENJOYMENT. Proof that, in his own words, who needs actions when you got words.

3

IN RETROSPECT. How may be the Jerns Cocker or Damon Albarn of today's austerity youth.

4

Monsieur Lazhar

Directed by **Philippe Falardeau**

Starring **Wahneema Lubiano, Sophie Nélisse,**

Émilien Néron

Released **May 4**



As words uttered by a troubled child reflect just as much hurt and pain as, say, a terrorist attack? It's a stretch, but that's the dizzying idea at the crux of director Philippe Falardeau's Canadian drama, and it's one that the filmmaker never shies away from. Set almost entirely within the walls of an elementary school, *Monsieur Lazhar* is a small fish that asks some very big questions.

It starts with a child discovering his teacher hanging from the classroom ceiling. This event sends shockwaves through the school. Children are unable to process the tragedy, while teachers struggle to help their young charges in an environment strictly regulated by fearful paranoid governing bodies. Into this tremulous setting sweeps *Monsieur Lazhar* (Dolores Falardeau), an Algerian immigrant who offers himself up as a replacement teacher. Monsieur Lazhar's methods, though, don't exactly chime

with the school's austere regime, and it's not long before he's pulling lemons.

British guy notions of this turning into a wacky classroom caper (though it's a sadist but Robin Williams is already sagging for an English-language remake). *Lazhar* isn't without humor, but its quips are all intelligently cracked. The gently unfolding story works with thoughtful observations and Falardeau drives fascinating comparisons between today's overly paranoid education system and the government's treatment of suspect immigrants.

The performances are key. As the responsive window-gazer, Falardeau puts in a beautifully understated turn, effectively spicing *Lazhar* into a mythical figure of the May Popera world (what's the schwa?). It's through him that many of Falardeau's ideas are nicely explored. The kids, meanwhile,

are nothing short of mesmerizing. Of them all, first-grader Sophie Nélisse goes top marks — her shell-shocked student issues a scorching bond with her teacher, and her emotional monologue is a guaranteed nose-blower. **Josh Warrant**

ANTICIPATION. A certain American search body went seriously nuts for this one.

3

ENJOYMENT. A class act. Touring but never overwrought, *Lazhar* is a sensitive, hopeful study on grief and innocence lost.

4

IN RETROSPECT. A timely examination of violence in our society through the eyes of those who can't control it.

4

